

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Lewis, founder, the Fishing School; John J. DiIulio, Jr., who will head the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; and Stephen Goldsmith, who will serve on the board of the Corporation for National Service.

### **Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Bipartisan Congressional Leaders** *January 31, 2001*

#### ***Legislative Agenda/Pan Am 103 Trial Verdict***

Thank you all for coming. This is part of our effort to get to know each other. And if Thomas and Grassley keep coming up here, we're going to get to know them too good, aren't we? [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the Members of the Congress for being here this morning. Thank you all for coming. We're going to have a good, wide-ranging discussion, hopefully focused on tax relief. I'm pleased to see the CBO members. I think it helps further the case that there is enough money to pay down debt, to meet priorities, and to give some of the money back to the people who pay the bills. That's the taxpayers.

I also appreciate so very much the Scottish court has made a decision and convicted a member of the Libyan intelligence service for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103. I appreciate the work of the United States Government team which contributed to this guilty verdict.

Nothing can change the suffering and loss of this terrible act, but I hope the families do find some solace that a guilty verdict was rendered. I want to assure the families and victims the United States Government will continue to pressure Libya to accept responsibility for this act and to compensate the families.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Representative William M. Thomas, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means; and Senator Charles Grassley, chairman, Senate Committee on Finance. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks in a Meeting With Catholic Charities**

*January 31, 2001*

Listen, thank you all for coming. It has been my honor and that of members of my staff and of my Cabinet to have received leaders from the Catholic Church. During my travels around the country, I have been most impressed by not only the quality of leadership of the men and women who make up the great strength of the Catholic hierarchy but also the unwavering commitment to the poor and to the disadvantaged and to those who are unable to defend themselves.

America is a loving and compassionate country, and the leaders here reflect that compassion and that love. Here are folks that have heard the call from the Lord to love their neighbor and have fostered and nourished and led programs all intended to help people, to help people help themselves.

There is no way that Government can create love. Love comes from a higher calling. Love is inspirational. But what Government can do is fund and welcome programs whose sole intent is to change lives in a positive way.

For the last couple of days I've talked about my office's commitment to faith-based programs; I've talked about initiatives, particularly mentoring initiatives and after-school programs that will welcome faith-based programs. Today I do want to talk about one other component of making sure the initiative is full, and that is that we must reform the tax code, not in the way that I'm going to be talking to a lot of Members of Congress about but in an additional way. And that is to allow non-itemizers to deduct charitable giving off their income.

This is a reform of the tax code that will encourage giving from people who have received no incentive to do so. There is an independent study out today that will show that giving in America will increase significantly when Congress passes this reform and I have the opportunity to sign it.

Our mission in the White House is to say, we welcome you; we welcome your love; we welcome your finances; we welcome your compassion. And to those heroes who live in the neighborhoods all around America who are literally transforming our country in

a positive way, we say, thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

I'm so honored the leadership came, many of whom I have seen before. I've now met new friends, and we welcome you here to Washington, DC.

Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the Indian Treaty Room at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

### Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

January 31, 2001

**The President.** Thank you all for coming. In my first Cabinet meeting we're going to discuss a variety of topics today. I'm going to remind all of us, it's an honor to serve the country. I expect only one standard, and that's the highest of ethical standards. We're putting together a great team to serve America. That's what we're here for.

I am going to talk a little bit about reminding people that a dollar spent is a tax—is somebody's money and that we expect there to be lean budgets, good stewards of the people's money. We'll hear from some of the Cabinet officers about what may be going on. I suspect the Energy Secretary may want to brief us. I think the Secretary of Treasury will give us an update on what's going on, the economy and tax relief.

I want to assure Americans that they're going to be as proud of this Cabinet as I am. This is a wonderful group of men and women who have agreed to serve their country, for which I'm grateful.

I'll be glad to answer a few questions.

#### Tax Cut Legislation

**Q.** Mr. President, are you beginning to think that Congress might act more quickly on your tax cuts if you break it up into pieces and seek across-the-board tax cut first?

**The President.** I told the Speaker and anybody else who will listen on the House side, where the legislation must begin, that we're interested in the results. If that's what it takes to get the bill through, we'll be willing to listen. This is an administration that's mindful of the difference between the legis-

lative branch and the executive branch. We will make suggestions if asked. If the Speaker and Chairman Thomas and others believe that the best way to get our plan in place that will help bolster the economy that we believe needs bolstering, we'll listen and work with them.

#### Pan Am 103 Verdict

**Q.** Mr. President, does the verdict in the Pan Am bombing case—should it leave any doubt that Libya was behind the bombing of Pan Am 103 as an act of state?

**The President.** This was a high official. We've made it very clear that this administration is going to hold the Libyans accountable. We expect them to pay reparations. The Secretary of State is in complete agreement.

**Q.** If they pay reparations—

**The President.** Let's see if they do.

**Q.** The Government of Tripoli just announced as we were coming in here that they will accept no responsibility for what happened. What happens now from the U.S. side?

**The President.** We'll develop a plan.

**Q.** Welcome back, Mr. Powell.

**The President.** He looks pretty good here, doesn't he? [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:28 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham; Secretary of the Treasury Paul H. O'Neill; Representative William M. Thomas, chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means; and Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Congressional Black Caucus

January 31, 2001

**The President.** I want to thank Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson from Dallas, Texas, and you all for coming. I appreciate—Madam Chairman. I look forward to a good dialog on subjects that are on the Members' minds and on my mind, as well. I think we'll have a good discussion about public education. While there may be some discussion about details, all of us, surely, believe the